

**Iowa Child Welfare Emergency Services (CWES)
Statewide Emergency Juvenile Shelter
Unallocated Bed Placement Protocol
SFY 2012**

In order to maximize use of statewide contracted shelter beds, the Department of Human Services (DHS or Department) through its service areas and Juvenile Court Services (JCS) in its judicial districts must work cooperatively and within uniform parameters. Most important in the decision to place a child in shelter or where to make that placement is the shared commitment to keep that child safe.

Shelter stays are considered placements of last resort in temporary, emergency situations. But when a CWES response is needed and other CWES components aren't appropriate to prevent an out of home placement into juvenile shelter, temporary placements should be made in shelters that are close to the child's home for their short duration.

This protocol was initiated in October 2005 and updated for SFY 2012 considering the current contracting process, the distribution of guaranteed contracted beds around the state, and the need for and use of unallocated beds when guaranteed beds aren't available. This protocol will continue to help the Department manage the use of contracted guaranteed and unallocated beds, while increasing the ability of the DHS Service Area Managers (SAM) to evaluate the suitability of each placement while following the basic principles that support the intent of shelter placements.

1. It is the expectation that DHS and JCS staff will make needed referrals to CWES contractors that will provide screening methods to determine whether or not CWES alternatives to a bed are appropriate to meet the child's needs. CWES contractors serving the county where the child lives should be used.
2. Shelter care placement should be used only when all other service or placement options are exhausted and shelter placement is appropriate and the only viable option. Court orders directly to shelter care must be followed. Considering this, referral workers should be encouraged to move toward a uniform practice around bed placement and screening for CWES alternatives, considering first the appropriateness of diversion from placement and the ability of the local CWES contractor to accomplish this successfully.
3. Once decided a bed is needed, referral workers will seek a shelter placement by first contacting the closest shelters for placement, checking to see if shelters within their local area have guaranteed beds available. This is most likely to be the shelter bed provided as a component of the local CWES contractor's program.
4. If shelters within their local area are full to their guaranteed contracted capacity, workers may seek approval from their SAM or designee to exceed the guaranteed capacity by using an unallocated bed. Decisions will be made on individual cases after considering the best interests of the child, distance from home the child may have to be placed otherwise, ability of the local shelter to best meet the needs of the child, and the shelter's licensed capacity. The SAM or designee must approve all placements into unallocated beds prior to the placement of a child.

5. In the case of an afterhour's law enforcement placement, all local guaranteed shelter bed options will be exhausted before an unallocated bed is accessed. When an unallocated bed is needed, approval must be sought from the SAM or designee prior to placement of the child. In these cases, the SAM or designee may be contacted by the shelter or by DHS/JCS staff depending on local practice, but approval must occur prior to placement in an unallocated bed.
6. On behalf of child protective assessment workers' requests and need for a bed, approval for an unallocated bed may be made by a child protection worker's (CPW) supervisor in lieu of the SAM or designee.
7. Within one business day of approval, the SAM, designee, or CPW supervisor will forward an email to the shelter where the child is placed, the referral worker, other identified persons in the service area, and the group care program manager in the Division of Adult, Children, and Family Services confirming the approval including the name of the child, the facility of placement, the name of the referring worker, and the county where the child resides.
8. Please remember the following:
 - a. Shelters cannot exceed their state licensed capacity;
 - b. Shelters must follow all Iowa licensure and approval standards, including those regarding staff to client ratios; and,
 - c. The child placed in the unallocated bed shall be moved into a vacant guaranteed bed as soon as a vacancy occurs. Any further unallocated placement requests must go through the approval process outlined above.

Once a child is placed in shelter, work immediately begins on discharge planning.

- Plans should focus on limiting stays to no more than 30 days.
- Supervisory staff will immediately begin assisting their staff with discharge planning for children placed in shelter. Both the direct worker and supervisor are responsible for meeting the 30-day discharge expectation.
- If a placement exceeds 45 days, a formalized review will occur to ensure the family team has been properly engaged to focus on next steps for the child and family.

This protocol is intended to serve as the statewide framework. Service areas may require more stringent review or planning in shelter care cases depending on service area/judicial district circumstances.